Human Transformation Independent of Knowledge and Time

by
Allan W. Anderson

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Some twenty years ago I was privileged to be invited by the world renowned spiritual teacher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, to undertake with him a series of video-taped dialogues. Their object was to bring forward the kernel of his teaching. In essence he taught that each human being is responsible for his or her own transformation, which is not dependent on knowledge or time. In another context he wrote in his own hand that: "The core of Krishnamurti's teaching is contained in the statement he made in 1929 when he said `Truth is a pathless Land.'"

These two statements, namely, that one's own transformation is independent of knowledge and time and that truth is a pathless land are most intimately related. Though on first glance they seem markedly distinct, nonetheless these statements are inseparable. On perceiving the reciprocal union of these two principal affirmations, one glimpses the undivided nature of genuine spirituality.

Spirituality and wholeness are also inseparable but the splendid word, wholeness, has in recent decades fallen on miserable times. It is used by many now to express the goal of growth techniques and methods by one or another party with a program to sell. This misuse of the word has provincialized the concept and turned it into a catchword that divides rather than heals. But this fine word can be rectified and restored to its proper usage if it is reunited to spirit instead of

being left naked to the agendas of traditional and popular psychologies. This hard remark provokes the question of the meaning of each word, spirituality and wholeness. I hope the progress of this paper will begin to disclose their meaning until at the conclusion of this essay I shall attempt a formulation that perhaps will help restore the words to their home ground.

The topic of this paper does not lend itself to the usual academic approach of research that leads to erudition. On the contrary it does not move by adding one thing to another whether by information or analysis. It moves not by addition but by subtraction; it seeks not more but less. It moves in the mode of meditation. This is because it labors in the field of self-inquiry. Authentic self-inquiry has received little attention throughout the long stretch of recorded human history. This is because genuine self-inquiry is independent of both outward and inward authority -- the outward being the imposition of political and economic constraints and the inward being the tyranny of ideas and the stream of consciousness that flows from them and feeds them.

Outward authority is easily recognized, the police state is its crudest form. Inward authority is much more subtle. It is a psychological self-bondage. To make matters worse, it harbors and ambivalence. It lets itself be dominated by scientific, philosophical and religious ideas which it receives at second and third hand yet at the same time it intellectually and emotionally drugs itself into a virtual substance dependency on these ideas and ideals. A principal mark of psychological self-bondage is that these ideas and ideals while in their fancied modes of truth, goodness and beauty are contemplated in abstraction only. Embodying them in real life is shunned like the plague. Moral and spiritual cowardice are endemic to our species whereas physical courage is demonstrated in one form or another every day. As for moral

courage, who among us is ready to stand alone against a majority of our fellows? As for spiritual courage, who among us is ready upon the instant to die the psychological death to our very imagined self-identity without which death there can be no self-liberation?

These questions cannot be answered collectively by common consent nor by meanderings among the denizens of the so called collective unconscious. They can be answered only by the individual, by oneself alone and unaccompanied. Genuine self-inquiry realizes this groundless ground which is virgin, uncharted, pathless and unimagined. One's persona disappears into this unthought and nameless emptiness for this emptiness is reality and reality is neither an event nor an experience.

These words are unintelligible so long as the persona is mistaken for the self. Self-inquiry reveals the persona as an ephemeral phenomenon of the self. To put the matter loosely, while the me is mistaken for the I the words in the previous paragraph will remain enigmatic and for some, plain gibberish. This is why pure self inquiry has received little attention throughout the long stretch of recorded human history. That level of human transformation which is independent of knowledge and time is not realized outside of self-inquiry and for that reason it remains a rarity.

At this point in our discussion it is necessary to point up that fatal misconception which holds that self-inquiry and introspection are one and the same. This misunderstanding arises out of a failure to discern that the inward world of motives, moods, feelings and wishes is equally external to the ego as is the outer world we see, hear, touch, smell and taste. On grasping the centrality of the ego and its standpoint one is in a position to give both the outer and inner worlds their due. It is from this base and standpoint that most of the higher products of culture in the

arts and sciences spring in all their ideality and beauty. Their ideality stretches indefinitely into the past while in the present artistic and scientific ideality anticipate the novel future. Unfortunately, the egoic standpoint does not overcome the illusion that the ego is an independent substance in being. This inveterate illusion generates the force of the twin concepts, personality and experience. These two concepts, personality and experience, undergird the theoretical structures of theology, philosophy and depth psychology. Even the transpersonal psychologist concerned to study the common root of personality is still faced with the question ultimately of what and who is I as agent who interprets the clinical data awaiting diagnosis? These questions prepare one to begin self-inquiry. One moves intemporally from there to the intuition that even one's sense of self presence cannot be equated with ego. Without this distance on the normal function of ego, self-inquiry cannot flower.

Only intelligence is required for self-inquiry and not any of the games of egoic intellect which impose rules of dogma, doctrine, ways and means, method and scope. Housed as these are within conventional interpretations and social structures they are rarely studied for their power both to hide and to disclose their roots. Such roots reach down into the subsoil of primordial wisdom. Historically, those few who touched this wisdom have most often paid dearly for it. Witness in the western tradition the executions of Jesus and Socrates.

If not in league with the egoic standpoint, what is the character of that intelligence which attracts, supports and illuminates pure self-inquiry? This question and the question of the self are inseparable for when they are studied with a pure act of attention these questions reveal that the ego so far from being at the center of the self is as external to it as the world of the five senses and the internal world of thought, will and feelings. They are the worlds of body and soul and the

self cannot be reduced to either or both of them.

The latter half of our twentieth century which is about to close has seen a growing enthusiasm for the religious thought of the South Asian and Far Eastern traditions. It is almost as though the far-ranging western missionary movements of the ninetheenth century are being answered this century from the east. The dialogue that this phenomenon engenders stimulates us to investigate what there is of authentic spirituality in our own western tradition.

It will not offend Krishnamurti's spirit if in this meditation I refer to scriptural passages from our own western tradition and from others. In our eighteen video-taped conversations I quoted a number of scriptural references from various cultures. He never once objected to this practice. Rather, he objected to the misuses of sacred texts. Unless one risks the living out of whatever there is of truth in such texts, they remain a meaningless clutter of so called knowledge, a heap coffined in the past and in no sense an occasion for present self-awakening. Psychological knowledge is what is meant here and not practical know-how which is knowledge of a different order.

Plato's virtual transcription of Socrates' *Apology* remains one of the clearest invitations to self-inquiry in our western tradition. Just before his judges render the verdict that will execute him Socrates says, "an unexamined life is not worth living." In the text he includes his own life in this. In saying that an unexamined life is not worth living he necessarily invites the question: who is the examiner and the examinee? If it is my life that I am examining, where do I, the examiner leave off and my life as object begin? Or, looked at from the standpoint of my life, the examined, where does my life leave off and I, the examiner begin? Furthermore, where does my

life leave off and the life of another and others begin? I am not raising these questions for the sake of mystification or as a shrewd rhetorical device by which to benumb a critical focus. On the contrary, if one sits with them quietly they open out upon a crucial distinction between two orders of attention. One we give to physical and technical matters which require a change of position in temporal or spatial objects. The other attention we give to attitudes which we take for granted in our relatively unconscious lust for security and a settled life. It is this latter attention which properly obtains while one is examining one's life.

Only such a non-utilitarian attention can reveal how it is the case that human transformation is independent of knowledge and time.

Let us examine the possibility of such a transformation through contemplating the relation of knowledge to time, of understanding to timelessness and of not-misunderstanding to timing. As we look into these, the meaning of the topic of this meditation might come clearer as well as the characters of spirituality and wholeness.

The English word, 'knowledge,' is etymologically somewhat obscure. However, what seems fairly certain is that it derives from Middle English where it meant 'to admit,' 'confess.' The element of confession gives the word a certain religious aura which confers upon it a high seriousness. An anterior etymology relates 'knowledge' to 'note' whose main source is Latin '*nota,*' a brand, a mark by which one recognizes what is at hand. These two etymological roots lend the word 'knowledge' a high respect and an air of permanency.

Both these characteristics of the word point to the ease with which the concept 'knowl-

edge' has uncritically attained to its eminence.

The word's relation to time is clearly on the side of the past since what bears a mark has already been branded. The bearer of the brand is easily reduced in the mind to a tool for carrying the mark as the mark is all important for identification; yet it remains an abstraction. As an abstraction it has the power to last well beyond the existence of its bearers. This seemingly magical property so enhances its dignity that it is easily forgotten that the mark, as such, is of the past and to fix the mind upon it imagining it an authentic creature of the present is to misunderstand oneself and the mark also.

These remarks do not apply to the practical order where the uses of memory are absolutely necessary. One could not drive a car, wash dishes, get to work or operate the most sophisticated instruments without the uses of memory, let alone undertake prodigious reckonings in the calculative order.

On the contrary, I refer here to the matter of attitude, *i.e.*, whether the measure of my present living is a mark from the past to which I am attached or whether my attention is one of listening and looking without attachment.